

Fall 2024: Music History III Reflection Questions

Overview:

- These were a graded assignment completed in class in the last week of the semester.
- Explanation offered:
- Why are we reflecting?
- Typical worksheet, drill-and-memorize, and test preparation approach to classroom teaching actually makes it difficult to retain the myriad bits of information you encounter during the school year. More effective is an instructional method that requires you to use important information repeatedly in complex and meaningful ways such as writing papers or completing projects.
- articulate and verbalize what you are learning—helps better digest and apply what you are learning in the course.
- self-reflection enhances learning and deepens connections and understanding with and between you & your colleagues.
- helps ME get descriptive feedback that I can use to improve my practice and the course itself.
- The questions were as follows (I asked for a hearty sentence for each):
- 1. Reflect on how you thought about **20th/21st century music** before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is (almost!) over. What's **ONE** thing that changed for you?
- 2. Name one thing that surprised you about music during this 123 year period
- 3. If you had to pick one of the "bigger themes/bigger picture questions/bigger issues" we discussed this semester to research further for a longer project, what would you pick and why?
- 4. If you could pick one musical example to add to this curriculum, what would you pick and why?
- 5. What is one thing that you learned in this class (or at least thought about in relation to this class) that connects with other musicking that you do? (this might include performing, teaching, scholarship in other disciplines, etc)

Anonymized student responses:

Note: Due to the sheer volume of student responses here, I have randomly selected the first 5 responses submitted from each section and reproduced them below (so 15 responses for each question). I'm happy to share the full documents of responses from each section, but this is a representative sample.

Responses to Question #1:

1. I thought of the 20th century as a time period when musical trends began to shape shift much quicker as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the widespread availability of information on an international scale, but I was surprised at how many different trends could overlap at one time, and how musical experience varied greatly even depending on where one lived or what kind of social circles one ran in.
2. Before this class I never really gave any thought to music in the 20/21st century. I only really paid attention to the music I liked and view other music as other sound (as funny as that sounds). Now I feel I understand more about music history as a whole and how what's happened in the past really effected music as it is today.
3. Before this course, I genuinely didn't know much about 20th/21st century music. I would listen to popular music, but that is the extent that I knew. In my particular curriculum as a vocalist, I have only ever really focused on earlier styles of Bel Canto, and the only 20th/21st century music I had ever performed was choral works and musical theater. Because of this, I feel like people often impressed upon me the view that 20th/21st century music is not "real" music, but after taking this course, I know that is not true at all. I definitely knew the virtuosity required to compose serial and atonal music before coming into this course, but one thing that really changed my view of 20th/21st century music after taking this course is just how much virtuosity goes into making popular music. I feel like it's something that society deems as being "simple" music, but it is actually quite complex.
4. I think I changed my perspective on how important music can be, it can change things, and it can be related to politics, before this semester I thought of 20th/21st century as just pop radio tunes (not that those are bad!) but I now realize its so much more.
5. I honestly didn't give much thought to 20th/21st century music before this course, outside of experiencing/listening to it. Now, I actually appreciate how many different styles there are and how many artists are leading exploration in new music, as well as actually paying attention to what instrumental music specifically does to convey emotion, rather than just feeling the emotion being conveyed. This course has taken me more out of being a receiver, and into analyzing and examining the music I listen to.
6. I feel that there is constantly a divide between core "staples" of music that we study at the collegiate level (classical, romantic, etc.), and I always saw that kind of music as being a separate entity from the music that I enjoy outside of class. Now, at the end of the semester I see all music as having a place in what I study because all music IS music- there isn't a right or wrong answer for what constitutes as music.

7. For me, it was the definition of pop music. Pop music to me meant the music that was overplayed on the radio and I normally found it annoying– but I remember the class where you asked us “what is the definition of pop music” and it completely changed my view and answer.
8. I think I used to think of 20th century music in a fairly black and white sense with clear transitions. Sort of a “neo classical and jazz until 1950s, rock and folk until the 80s, synth pop and grunge until the 2000s” Most of that stuff was going on simultaneously, which I knew, but never really thought about.
9. When considering what would be covered in a music history course, I’d assumed that Art music whether it be Opera or serialism would be the central and perhaps even the only focus. I’ve been so used to Crane curriculums focusing on more classical and classical adjacent forms of music, that I hadn’t considered what a large role entertainment music has in the course of music history. Whether it be remixes created by D.J.s or Jazz, music to be enjoyed by those outside of classical musical spheres was a huge component of this class which I really enjoyed. It was cool to see how these musical spheres overlapped and differed.
10. One thing that changed in my perception of 20th/21st century music was my thinking about serialism, and specifically the reasons for it. I’d previously thought of it as cool, math-y music for the sake of making cool, math-y music, but never made the connection of postwar music wanting to distance itself from human emotion (and its resulting 20th century atrocities) as a sort of coping mechanism.
11. Prior to taking this course, I had honestly not engaged with very much music composed after 1900, outside of 21st century popular music, movie soundtracks, and wind band repertoire. Glancing back on my relative lack of exposure to 20th century music, I was most certainly not knowledgeable about music from this time period in any way, shape, or form. I was also very much under the impression that “Music After 1900,” as a broad category, equates entirely to serialism and atonal music. These were the types of music that I studied in Music Theory IV, and they are also the types of music that I engage with in the wind band world, so I was not familiar with anything outside of those realms. One way in which my perception of music from the past century has changed as a result of this class is that I now realize how “popular music” has been a term used for multiple different types and styles of music; the term is not exclusive, and it stretches farther back than the beginning of the 21st century. I feel as though I now have a wider scope in recognizing that there is more to this last century of music than atonal sonorities and auto-tuned pop singing.
12. I feel a lot more knowledgeable on music since 1900 now, I feel a lot more knowledgeable about a lot of 1920s music, especially swing. I had a very vague idea of what this entire century was like in terms of music, but now it is much clearer and I’d say that this course just helped make it so.

13. Before I took this course I guess I didn't realize how much music makes up this time period. I guess that it is maybe a naive assumption, but until you see all of the different types of music that make up this period and how drastically different they are from one another is really cool.
14. Before taking this course, I would dismiss 20th/21st century music as entirely contemporary and , but after learning about several examples I know that is not the case and there is lots of history rooted in music during this time.
15. I ignorantly assumed that most 20th/21st century music was written using serialism and minimalism, totally disregarding the different styles and genres and applications of music. I am glad that I learned about the development of jazz and the historical background that shaped different styles, as well as how video games incorporated music based on its technical limitations. It feels like these centuries quickly developed, more so than previous centuries, and the repertoire exponentially expanded.

Responses to Question #2:

1. I was especially surprised to learn that even despite the Jim Crow laws and widespread segregation of the immediate post-war period, the United States government still upheld jazz as a paragon of musical expression of freedom, going so far as to sponsor trips abroad for "jazz ambassadors" like Louis Armstrong to showcase the incredible work they were doing. There's a huge element of dishonesty with this though, as they were attempting to approve that racial diversity is celebrated in the U.S. when in fact, it was often deliberately repressed on the homefront.
2. One this that surprised me was how tedious the touring process was for groups in the past, especially the female touring groups.
3. One thing that really surprised me about music from this period was the political implications behind music. I've heard songs with political meanings before, but I didn't know that different styles of music could hold political meaning. For example, 12-tone and serial music represented freedom for the United States during the Cold War.
4. I was surprised by simply the plethora of musical genres that emerged during this time.
5. I was very surprised by how many similarities I could hear between very different styles of music, and how much music exists in the world that I haven't even come close to hearing yet! I have so much more to explore and listen to!
6. Something that surprised me the most about music during this 123 year period was how political music could get, and the power that it holds.
7. Learning about music in the early 1900s that wasn't strictly classical... because that's all we're exposed to so how are we supposed to know differently? I shouldn't have

been that surprised about this but I was! That's why I took an interest in the book you loaned me "Everybody's Doin' It".

8. I can hear more qualities in early 1900s music that you still hear in music today. It's a much closer relation than I expected.
9. I was very surprised to learn about how huge a role music played in solidifying Soviet identity and how it was used as a tool for control. I never really associate government support for the arts with censorship and oppression, so it's very eye opening to see how it can be used as a way to control public opinion and enforce a national identity.
10. I was surprised by how big musicians' egos were! I know that in some performance spaces/showbusiness, pride can be necessary to succeed, but certain claims read as elitist or downright delusional. If I had to pick, I'd cite Babbitt (comparing himself to Einstein) and Stravinsky (denying the incorporation of folk tunes in *The Rite of Spring*), respectively— surely, they considered how this might affect their legacies(?).
11. One thing that surprised me about music during this 123 year period is that so many of the larger social, political, and cultural trends manifested their overarching messages in the musical art form. I was always under the impression that visual art was the primary microcosm of these national and international trends, so I was quite shocked to hear that auditory art forms also played a large role in communicating movements for change. Specifically, I had no idea that music had a place in the Civil Rights Movement throughout the mid-20th century, and I was duly unaware of the way this movement, in turn, was woven into some of the more popular tunes, such as "Blowin' in the Wind," from this era.
12. I knew that there was going to be a lot of variety, but it shocks me just how MUCH variety there really is. It feels like an explosion of developments during this period, more so than any other.
13. I think what surprised me the most is how we started versus where we ended. 123 in retrospect is not much time and the amount of growth in music is wild. Obviously, the increase in new technology also allowed for music to change at an astronomical rate but still compared to other 100 year spans, this feels the most different by the end.
14. The period of time where composers decided to make really complicated music, and that they actually had reasonings behind it, and it was almost a status thing, was very surprising as I once again have just decided I didn't like this music from an early age.
15. As mentioned earlier, I was surprised by how much was created and developed in such a short time span. However, the one thing that surprised me about music the most was the decision to use classical music (i.e. Bach) in early video games. This combines two interests and might introduce new enjoyers (or critics) to each field.

Responses to Question #3:

1. I would love to explore in more depth the elements of humor present in much contemporary music. I find it to be an intriguing aspect of how music subtly rebels against some of the more serious or oppressive trends in politics or everyday life, and I've always admired the work of musical satirists like Phil Ochs or Randy Newman.
2. One thing that I feel would be interesting as a project or an interesting research portion would have to be diving farther into POC composers/musicians from this time. I feel it's really important to give those their flowers when deserved. From the list that was given-Do we always value music that is "innovative"? Or are there other things that are just as important to us? And what kinds of musical "innovations" tend to be most frequently discussed? This might be interesting to dive into as we are always listening for somethings new and as time goes on what's "original" is going to be old news.
3. If I had to choose a bigger theme discussed in class to do further research on, I would definitely choose music and narrative. I think it is so interesting that the music in operas and musical theater can augment the plot in so many ways and provide details about the characters that may have never even been considered just by listening to the narration. I'd really like to dive deeper into questions such as "does the instrumental music tell us something about a character's inner thoughts and feelings?" and "is the orchestra taking on a narrator-like role?" I would especially like to explore this in some of Mozart's more famous operas like Don Giovanni and Le Nozze di Figaro, because there are so many arias in these operas where the music does not match what the character is trying to express.
4. I would probably pick music and politics or music and narrative because I love stories and I love how music has the power to change minds.
5. I would really like to do more research into gender inequality in the music industry specifically. We did have the political unit, but I feel that we could also do a project on gender/race/orientation inequality in the industry, as it is an issue that hasn't really gone away and could be researched in multiple directions. (Ex: performance, ownership of music, opportunities in business, marketing, expectations of music/performance practices, expectations of presentation/personality, etc.)
6. If you could pick one musical example to add to this curriculum, what would you pick and why? I would add Shostakovich String Quartet No. 8: I think there is a lot to unpack within its dedication to "victims of fascism and war"
7. I think I would've loved to go further with music and politics because there were so many examples of this! I don't think you should change your curriculum because I think it was the perfect amount of this topic for the timeframe we had in this class, but for me I personally took an interest and I wanted to keep researching.

8. Experimenting with new sounds. I think people can create fantastic music with the already existing techniques, but I find it interesting to see what's out there.
9. I'd absolutely pick Music and Politics. It is especially relevant to today as current musical artists are faced with pressure from contemporary audiences to not only be artists but also political activists. The pressure on musical artists of today to make political statements can be analyzed and compared to the numerous ways music has been used as a political tool over the years. It opens the door to questions about what is genuine vs. performative activism, how influential can music really be, and how censorship by the government affects such music-making.
10. I'd pick "Is the orchestra taking on a narrator-like role" for further research, simply because I'm very interested in how people communicate extramusical ideas through musical characteristics (rather than lyrics).
11. One of the bigger themes that I would choose to research for a longer project would be the connection between music and dance, specifically centered around the questions: "What is different about how we study musics of the past versus dances of the past? In terms of sources and challenges, are they the same or different?" I would pick this topic because I, personally, admit that I am lacking immense skill when it comes to the physical embodiment of an auditory art form that I go to school for. I have always been under the impression that music majors should truly be encouraged to take at least one dance course during their time in school because feeling the rhythm throughout one's body is a unique phenomenon that I think it behooves musicians to have this experience. When school children take general music classes, many of the activities used in these classes synthesize music with dance. This is the way we all start out, and then as we get older, these two realms seem to separate into visual and auditory interpretations of what should really be an interconnected art form. With these sentiments in mind, I would quite enjoy researching further on this topic to discover the endless collection of ways that music and dance can be combined.
12. I would probably pick even more music and politics. I really enjoyed that subject, and there is just so much to explore when it comes to how music is used in the real world, it really intrigues me.
13. I would probably want to talk about music and dance a bit more. I think this topic is interesting because of how linked music and dance are and to be able to research more about it would be cool.
14. I think an interesting project would be the evolution of music in video games.
15. I would research if we always value music that is "innovative" and what kinds of musical "innovations" tend to be most frequently discussed because I want to understand how people decided to invent or try new ideas, as well as influence technological advancements had on this development. It would be interesting to learn about the backgrounds of innovators, try to understand what inspired them to

lean away from the traditional methods, and recognize how they created new techniques.

Responses to Question #4:

1. I would add Us3's "Cantaloup (Flip Fantasia)", a hip hop track from 1993 that prominently samples Herbie Hancock's jazz standard "Cantaloupe Island". I was introduced to this track about a year ago and I find it to be one of the best examples of how sampling has been used to promote genre blending in modern music, and how rapping can be integrated with melodic ideas to create a fulfilling musical experience.
2. I would add "we are the world" performed by multiple celebrities as it deals with hope and its just so good!
3. One musical example I would add to this curriculum is "We Can Mend the Sky" (2014) by Jake Runestad. This piece features SATB choir and percussion. Jake Runestad is an example of a young, living composer who incorporates modern political themes into his music. This piece specifically raises the voices of young children who risked their lives with their families to come to the United States to escape the violent civil war in Somali. It speaks to themes of coming together and leading with love to end violence. I like this piece specifically because it speaks of relevant issues, world violence, but it is written from a child's perspective, so it is not as heavy as some of Runestad's other works. However, many of his works respond to current and relevant political issues, and he is a great example of how music can be used for change. He is also relatively young and somewhat close in age to our generation, making him even more relevant for collegiate musicians.
4. Probably a musical theatre song cause that's what I like, maybe like a song from into the Woods?
5. I think that 'Peter and the Wolf,' (Sergei Prokofiev) would be a great addition to this curriculum, as it is one of (if not, the?) first times that I know of themes being given to a specific character, and repeated whenever that character is presented in the story. This is one of the first classical pieces I was introduced to and I am quite familiar with it, and it has a very long history of performance and adaptation. I think it would be a great addition! (Also, a silly note, it's where my name comes from!)
6. I learned that every piece of music has a story behind it. I think that I have become a lot more aware of the importance of recognizing the background of music that I am performing and teaching to others.
7. I'm wondering if we could go into hip-hop and rap maybe!
8. I would add 90s grunge, maybe Nirvana or something similar. I would love to analyze the techniques they use, consciously or unconsciously.
9. I'd add more contemporary musical theatre to the curriculum such as "Spring Awakening" and "Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812". Musicals such as

these showcase genre blending and collaboration between musical artists from different artistic spheres— folk rock, indie, punk rock, electro-pop, Musical Theatre, Opera/Classical, and so on. Two pieces that demonstrate this are “The Opera” from “Great Comet” and “Don’t Do Sadness/Blue Wind” from “Spring Awakening”

10. I’d add Marc-Andre Hamelin’s Etude No. 1 in A minor, “Triple Etude, after Chopin.” It is a virtuosic piano work which combines 3 already-virtuosic Etudes; the result is pretty insane. I think pieces like this —remarkably difficult transcriptions and arrangements— definitely have a place within the “Why make music difficult/complex?” discussion.
11. One musical example that I would add to this curriculum is Aretha Franklin’s “Respect.” Although we danced around this example throughout our discussions of the Civil Rights Movement and feminist anthems, of sorts, in this class, I feel as though this example, in particular, is one that shows the intersection of multiple social, political, and cultural trends that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. This song can be interpreted in various contexts, such as in response to the Vietnam War, as well as in support of equality and justice for the minority populations in the United States. “Respect” plays a role in intersectional feminism, while also speaking for, quite frankly, any person in America who felt the effects of discrimination during the mid-20th century. The song continues to be an anthem for respect to this day.
12. I personally think that I would add a bit more modern genres, such as 1970s classic rock going into the music we hear on the radio today, I feel like that period was missing from this class.
13. I can’t think of any specific examples but I would maybe include more works by queer composers before the 21st century.
14. I think what I did for my guest DJ would be a good edition. To refresh memory, I did the first ever recorded jam session of Elvis, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash. I think it could segue to a big picture question of what casual music is good for, jams across different styles of music etc...
15. I would pick “Dance PM” from Hiroshi Yoshimura’s album, Music for Nine Post Cards because it uses a Fender Rhodes - an electro mechanical tine piano – and continues the discussion of how innovations change the sounds of music. This musical example could also develop conversations about music and place because this piece - and the entire album - is inspired by nature and is categorized as ambient/environmental music.

Responses to Question #5:

1. The use of music in tandem with film or video games is very relevant to some of the teaching techniques I've learned in Practicum in Elementary General Music. During our "responding" and "creating" portions of the theme-based curriculum unit we created for our young students, we were constantly searching for ways to use other

artistic artifacts as springboards for musical experiences, promoting cross-disciplinary understanding of core concepts in the process. If I could integrate music videos or even accessible, age-appropriate video games in these lessons, it might really heighten engagement or inspire the students to make even more individualized choices.

2. I have learned that dance is often always connected to music and it is important to incorporate music as well as dance into my teaching.
3. I actually chose one of my songs for my repertoire next semester based on a composer we studied in this class! I am trying to find more works by female composers, and I really enjoyed listening to and learning about the works of Cecile Chaminade, so I did some further research into her vocal works. Next semester, I am going to be singing "Mots d'amour" and I am hoping to explore more of her vocal works in the future!
4. I have learned music doesn't have to be one specific way to be valued, like I don't have to perform the most complicated thing for it to be good music.
5. Honestly, one of my biggest takeaways from this course was fairly recent, and it is that music and motion are intrinsically connected. I hadn't really thought about this learned disconnection very much, but it now makes so much sense to me- music is felt in our bodies, and should be! I really want to explore including motion more in my own music making, and being conscious of the inner motion of my body and my limbs as I play. I feel this is especially useful for percussion, so I look forward to really being intentional in the way I incorporate motion into my playing. Thank you so much for a wonderful semester! I loved this course!!
6. I think much more about the impact that the past has had on the music I make today as well as the political implications that music has, whether the composer meant it to be a political statement or not.
7. Teaching! I can't wait to teach a more modern curriculum of music history like you did!
8. Recording and live playing with movies and whatnot. I am an audio engineer and photographer, so I'm interested in how that industry and music looked 100 years ago.
9. I've learned that whether intentional or not, and regardless of the size of the audience, music has political implications. I am now very keen to understand the historical and political context of the music I perform, especially as someone exploring the world of opera. Separating theater from the political intent of its writers is irresponsible, as various operas are littered with problematic rhetoric that can be directly traced to the political views of their composers. Understanding and unpacking this is key to responsible character portrayal on the stage, and I will be sure to keep this in mind going forward.

10. I learned about Pagodes by Debussy, which I then learned as a jury piece. On the day I performed it in studio, my teacher randomly decided that every performer should now give the historical context behind the work they're about to play—I was surprisingly prepared! It's going on my recital next semester; if you're at all interested, maybe I could come in and perform it live when it's covered? It'd be good to put it in front of people and get nervous.
11. One thing that I learned in this class that connects with other musicking I do is how to remain mindful of the importance associated with respectfully borrowing styles of music that are different from the ones with which I primarily engage. For instance, many contemporary collections of flute repertoire include extended techniques and what I would identify as sacred music in at least some small capacity. I have always been slightly hesitant to play pieces on my instrument that were originally played on flageolets, tin whistles, or other instruments of the recorder variety because I do not feel comfortable trying to imitate techniques from these other types of instruments that most non-musicians identify as "flutes." I can not pinpoint my exact area of discomfort, but it simply feels disrespectful. Knowing that there are ways to go about playing these styles of pieces with respect for the musical traditions from which they originated and undergoing the learning processes with integrity for the peoples who share this music with the world makes me more open to exploring the realm of possibilities for not only my own instrument, but other instruments, as well.
12. There are a lot of different ways that this class has applied. Especially with what we learned about jazz, knowing the context to many of these songs gives some much more depth to the performance, and this class has given me a lot of opportunity to look into these contexts and if I were to perform any of these songs, they'd be a lot more full and valid.
13. In this class I was able to learn about all different types of genres and music outside what I am already familiar with! I was able to learn more about the history of jazz, swing, girl groups, disco, ballets, etc.
14. In my own rep, I have learned to pay extra close attention to almost everything, especially in this century's composers, everything has meaning. Especially the time period where everything was insanely complicated. I have learned to appreciate that more, instead of immediately dismissing it as bad music.
15. Music and emotions go hand in hand. Composers write music to express ideas and feelings, teachers probe students to understand what emotions drove a composition to sound the way it does, and performers use their understanding of the piece alongside their personal emotions to give life to music. The various topics covered this semester explain the different ways emotions show up in music and guide the creative process, and it connects with my experience trying to embed emotion and character into the repertoire I work on to create an authentic and original performance.